

Federal Actions to Assist the Drought Emergency

As called for in the President's Climate Action Plan, the National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP) is coordinating long-term Federal preparedness for drought. The NDRP coordinates Federal efforts broadly across the country and is working closely with State, local government, agriculture and other partners to improve community preparedness and resilience to drought.

With a focus on building long-term drought resilience, the NDRP is dedicated to helping communities better prepare for future droughts and reducing the impact of drought events on livelihoods and the economy. NDRP is comprised of: the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Department of the Interior (DOI), the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (US Army Corps), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

The following provides the highlights of ongoing Federal water management actions, as well as funding and tools to assist in addressing drought.

Assistance to Farmers, Communities, and Families Impacted by Drought

- On April 22, 2015, USDA [announced](#) it will provide more than \$112 million for projects to improve rural communities build and upgrade their water and energy infrastructure systems. The projects will be funded through USDA's **Rural Development's Water and Environmental Program**.
- On April 9, 2015, USDA [announced](#) \$73 million in **Watershed Rehabilitation funding** for 150 dam projects nationwide. Funds are used to rehabilitate and assess dams across the nation, delivering benefits that may include improved water supply in drought affected areas, flood damage reduction, and recreational benefits.
- In January 2015, USDA [announced](#) more than \$370 million in funding to 115 **high-impact conservation projects** across the nation that will improve soil health, water quality and water use efficiency, wildlife habitat, and other related natural resources on private lands. Roughly \$60 million was dedicated to projects that primarily target water quantity or drought-related resource concerns. In May 2015, USDA announced up to \$235 million for the next round of projects.
- DOI's Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) is implementing a new [Drought Response Program](#) in 2015. Funding will be allocated through competitive processes for drought contingency planning, drought resiliency projects, and emergency response projects. In May, Reclamation released two funding opportunity announcements under the new Program; the amount of FY15 funding available for the Program is \$5 million.
- Reclamation is providing \$19.9 million in 2015 as part of the [Western Drought Response Funding](#) for California's Central Valley Project. Reclamation is also dedicating an additional \$8.8 million for the Central Valley Project. The funding will support operations and maintenance, fish passage and fish screens, and to supplement the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) water conservation partnerships to improve efficiency of agricultural water use in California.

- [Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund](#) (CWSRF): EPA continues to provide low interest, 30-year extended term financing to States to undertake a variety of water quality improvement projects. Over the last two and half decades, the CWSRFs have provided over \$100 billion, funding more than 33,320 low-interest loans.
- [EPA Region 9](#) (Pacific Southwest) is working with Indian Health Services and the California Office of Emergency Services to assist **tribes** across California at risk of running out of drinking water.

Wildfire Assistance

- [Sierra Nevada Watershed Improvement Program](#): Launched on March 4, 2015, this partnership between the Sierra Nevada Conservancy and the U.S. Forest Service seeks to improve the Sierra's ability to store and filter water and reduce fire risks by restoring forests. The program will coordinate the diverse activities of government agencies, property owners, and non-profit groups to restore streams and meadows, improve habitat and thin overgrown forests, and protect the economic uses of the land, such as logging and grazing.
- **Two Chiefs' Joint Restoration**: In 2014 the U.S. Forest Service and the NRCS have entered into a multi-year partnership to improve the health and resiliency of forest ecosystems where public and private lands meet across the nation. The [Two Chiefs' Joint Landscape Restoration Partnership](#) invested \$30 million in 13 projects in 12 states across the country in 2014 to help reduce wildfire threats to communities and landowners, protect water quality - and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. In 2015, the 13 projects will receive continued investments, and additional projects will be selected.
- [Wildfire Preparedness](#): DOI's Bureau of Land Management (BLM), along with the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL-FIRE) have boosted fire management resources to 7-day staffing and is engaged in increased coordination. BLM is prepared to submit a fire severity funding request when needed and is also increasing monitoring of drought sensitive hydrologic resources.

Improved Drought Monitoring, Planning, Research, and Tools

- **The WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency and Title XVI Grants** – On May 20, 2015, DOI's Secretary Jewell [announced](#) \$50 million in funding for Water and Energy Efficiency Grants, as well as water reclamation and reuse projects and feasibility studies under the Title XVI Program for this year. The Water and Energy Efficiency grants seek to conserve and use water more efficiently, increase the use of renewable energy, improve energy efficiency, benefit endangered and threatened species, facilitate water markets, carry out activities to address climate-related impacts on water or prevent any water-related crisis or conflict.
- On May 4, 2015, the US Army Corps [issued](#) an emergency permit to the California Department of Water Resources to install an **emergency salinity barrier** in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to repel salinity that could threaten a source of water used by 25 million Californians. Installation began soon after the permit was issued.
- In May, 2015, NOAA [opened](#) a new **National Water Center** on the campus of the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, dedicated to water forecasts, research, and collaboration. The new facility will focus on

creating actionable science to drive the development of new products and services to mitigate and prepare for water-related challenges ranging from floods to drought.

- **Water Challenge Grants:** On April 7, 2015, USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture [announced](#) 21 grants totaling more than \$10 million have been awarded to universities to support critical water problems in rural and agricultural watersheds across the United States. The grants will be used to develop management practices, technologies and tools for farmers, ranchers, forest owners and citizens to improve water resource quantity and quality.
- On January 26, 2015, USDA [announced](#) \$20 million funding availability for FY15 **Conservation Innovation Grant** proposals that encourage, among other priorities, new approaches to increasing water use efficiency. Last year, USDA awarded \$15.7 million in to 47 organizations.
- **Climate Hubs:** On February 5, 2014, USDA [announced](#) the establishment of seven **USDA Regional Climate Hubs**. These regional hubs will serve the needs of agricultural producers and foresters as a source of regional data and interpretation of climate change forecasts for hazard and adaptation planning for agriculture and resource management
- **The Agricultural Research Service (ARS)** [conducts research](#) to increase the efficiency of agricultural water use, including the safe use of nontraditional waters (e.g., high salinity waters; treated wastewaters) to develop improved drought early warning systems such as the satellite-based Evaporative Stress Index (in collaboration with NOAA); and to harness genetic resources to increase drought and heat resilience in crops.
- **Science to Assess Drought:** DOI's U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) is [measuring stream flow](#) through the Sacramento – San Joaquin Delta and throughout the state of California. USGS monitors groundwater availability and quality as well as the subsidence resulting from groundwater withdrawal and the impacts of that subsidence on water conveyance infrastructure integrity.
- **EPA's Drought Response and Resilience Guide:** EPA is developing a [Drought Response and Resilience Guide](#) for drinking water utilities to plan for and respond to drought.
- **Drought Information and Early Warning:** [The U.S. Drought Monitor](#) is produced each week through a NOAA-USDA-University of Nebraska, Lincoln partnership. [The U.S. Monthly and Seasonal Drought Outlooks \(NOAA/NWS\)](#) show projected trends for areas experiencing drought as well as indicating areas where new droughts may develop. The 1- and 3-month Long-Lead Temperature and Precipitation Outlooks, currently depicted as probabilities and critical inputs into the Drought Outlooks, will be evaluated for a complementary non-technical format (e.g. anomalies or departures) based upon recent customer and participant feedback at drought workshops and forums in the West.
- The [National Integrated Drought Information System \(NIDIS\)](#) is a NOAA-led, cross-agency effort that provides users with access to data, information, expertise and networks of practitioners to improve communication about drought conditions, information about impacts and risks, and support for local planning and preparedness strategies.

Efforts to reduce the federal water footprint

- On March 19, 2015, President Obama signed [Executive Order 13687](#) that will further reduce Federal portable and industrial, landscaping and agriculture water use an additional 2% per year through 2025.
- In response to the drought, in 2014 the President [directed](#) all federal facilities in California to take immediate steps to curb their water use, including a **moratorium on water usage for new, non-essential landscaping projects**. Agency successes include: EPA's regional Federal Green Challenge participants conserved over 355 million gallons of water; the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) cut water use by 36% to conserve over 729 thousand gallons of water; the DEA Lab in the Pacific Southwest cut potable water use by 40% to conserve 38,906 gallons of water; and the San Diego Naval Base Coronado reduced water use last year by 20%, conserving over 101 million gallons.
- **Reducing Water Use:** Between 2007 and 2013, federal agencies reduced potable water use by 19%. To date, across the nation, USDA has reduced potable water consumption by 18% since 2007 and other water consumption by 62% since 2010.

Increased Coordination and Flexibility in Water Allocations

- **Water Transfers through Collaborative Agreements:** Reclamation has [reached numerous agreements](#) with the State of California and water users on the delivery of transfer and exchange water. These additional agreements add to Reclamation's ability to flexibly manage and operate the system to serve multiple beneficial purposes that include water for cities and rural communities, farms, fish and wildlife and their habitats. This suite of actions will also help increase the amount of water that can be transferred to areas of the state that have the greatest need for additional water supplies, maximize operational flexibility, and assist in meeting environmental objectives.
- **Endangered Species Act Flexibility:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) is [providing maximum flexibility](#) in this drought year with respect to timing and amount of water deliveries for the management of threatened and endangered species. FWS has been working with Federal and state partners on real-time water operations and operations planning to look at all possible means to manage threatened and endangered species concerns while maximizing the potential for water exports, when additional natural flows are available.
- **Fish Migration Monitoring:** Reclamation provided funding to FWS for [Delta Smelt Early Warning Surveys](#), to provide an early alert if smelt begin to move into the Central Delta. These surveys are intended to help maximize water deliveries while avoiding excessive entrainment. The FWS has also worked with the state of California to provide additional monitoring to support operation of the Delta Cross Channel gates to protect migrating salmon and steelhead.
- **Short Term Water Deviations:** To help alleviate the effects of the drought, the US Army Corps [granted short term deviations](#) for Prado dam and Whittier dam water control operations, allowing the dams to temporarily store more water.